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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
of Minorities
Fiftieth session
Agenda item 12 (b) (ii)

REVIEW OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN FIELDS WHICH THE SUB-COMMISSION HAS BEEN OR MAY BE CONCERNED

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS RELATING INTER ALIA TO:

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF

Letter dated 28 August 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Group of member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in Geneva, I would like to present to you in an annex* my statement on behalf of the OIC Group. I would appreciate circulation of this letter and its annex as an official document of the fiftieth session of the Sub-Commission under agenda item 12 (b) (ii).

(Signed) Fahad Awaida AL-THANI
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chairman of the OIC Group

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* The annex is circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

ANNEX

The OIC Statement

In the statement made on behalf of member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on 6 August 1998 in the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, expressing concern over attempts by some quarters to insult Islam, I stressed that "Human Rights fora should not be used to fan the flame of religious hatred and intolerance ". I also urged the Sub-Commission to ensure that such attacks are not allowed against any religion or belief.

Unfortunately, this year, the Sub-Commission witnessed that Islam, its principles and value systems had been insulted again. In our opinion anti-Islamic statements demonstrate either a simple failure or a misplaced desire. A failure to distinguish Islam from some muslims practices and a desire to spread Islamophobia. We do not wish to conclude the latter. We believe this irresponsible attitude emanates from short-sighted considerations that should be discouraged by the Sub-Commission itself because, in fact, this confrontational manner serves no purpose but only to jeopardize the endeavours to promote tolerance and understanding.

The OIC member states have adopted a resolution which expresses deep concern at the aggression whether verbal, physical or in the form of publication, by the spoken and written words targeting Islamic values and sanctities. It appeals to all OIC member states to stand resolutely against these challenges. While observing its commitment to the principle of freedom of expression, the OIC shares the view of the overwhelming majority of the international community in rejecting false attempts to spread religious intolerance under pretext of the freedom of expression.

I would like to reiterate the desire of the OIC to work with other interested partners in the field of promotion of Human Rights in the spirit of openness and understanding in order to constitute a non-confrontational international atmosphere in which constructiveness and cooperation prevail.

It is my sincere hope that through immunizing the United Nations Human Rights mechanisms from the calamity of disrespect, there would be no need to this sort of statement in the future. Let us learn from the divine Islam and replace hatred and insult with dialogue and respect.